

March 5, 1960

Dear John:

It was very good to hear from you. From all I hear, Jim is doing a splendid job in medical genetics. Since he has also turned down some of the most important jobs in the country, you must be giving him almost all the backing he deserves, and I am sure Connie is too. Speaking of Connie, I was rather outraged by some comments in a piece that ran in Harpers a while back; they must have been invented out of whole cloth. But it seemed best not to say anything that would invite even more ridiculous comment. I have immense respect for him, and in retrospect am rather sorry that he might not have reached his present position a few years earlier.

You were particularly interested in our program in Genetics. As to the teaching, we have one quarter-hour in each of the 2d and 3d years (of our 5 year program). But this is just the start. Biochemistry is very heavily oriented to DNA and genetics in the first year, and Pediatrics (esp., perhaps also Medicine later) has a strong push for genetics in the clinical years. Clinical genetics will be Pediatrics' responsibility more than ours -- Norm Kretzmer himself, Herb. Schwartz coming from Utah (hemoglobins) and Toby Gross (glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase defects) are on the book now; we have concrete plans for another clinical geneticist to come in on a joint appointment very soon. We are generally agreed here that the Genetics Department (by analogy with Biochemistry) should adhere to a basic science mission, but should furnish every encouragement and scientific support for the application of genetics in the clinical departments. So, for example, if we ever do set up any sort of counseling service, this would probably be in Pediatrics.

My own research remains connected with previous lines, though our close association with Biochemistry is invaluable for particular emphasis on genetic chemistry, e.g. the isolation and characterization of genetically active DNA. Our present lab. facilities are mainly well embedded in Biochemistry; in due course we hope to move to a better preplanned lab. for the department. At the present time, Genetics comprises two assistant professors (Nossal, Herzenberg) and some research associates; we are planning to make one additional major appointment (would have been Jim if he were interested) and probably one or two joint appointments at about assoc. prof'p. We are using about 6000 sq. ft. net and will eventually settle in to about 8000 plus animal facilities plus some joint service areas with Pediatrics and with Biochemistry. All of which really is as much as I would care to handle.

With great appreciation, I remember the advice you gave me once not to involve myself in some DOD advisory board; having gotten over that hurdle of conscience I have found it much easier since then to react more ruthlessly to legitimate but impossible-to-meet demands on my time. You might not believe this if you saw my actual travel schedule, but it is not in fact too bad. It hasn't always worked to insist on having meetings in California rather than Washington, but the proposals have not always been vehemently resisted. I should learn to ignore correspondence, but the temptation to keep in touch with old friends remains, as it was now, irresistible.

Yours, as ever,

Joshua Lederberg